

**Success of the Chinese Sugar Cane.**  
WASHINGTON, Dec. 16, 1886.  
A CIRCULAR is about being issued from the United States Patent Office by Commissioner Mason, under the special direction of D. J. Browne, Esq., which will be sent to the different State Agricultural Societies in the United States, accompanied by a parcel of the Chinese sugarcane seed raised under the supervision of the above named officer.

The Chinese sugarcane seed raised under the supervision of the above named officer, sufficient to cultivate sixteen acres, with the view of extending the culture of this plant in the several States. I have been kindly favored with an advance copy of the circular referred to for publication in the *Tribune*. It is a subject of the highest importance to the people of the Northern States, especially those of the Northern portion of the Union, and for this reason I make no apology for quoting largely.

"If consistent with the regulations of your Society, you will oblige me by putting into such hands for cultivation as will be likely to keep the seed pure and unadmixed with broomcorn, Guinea corn, or other plants that would be liable to mix or hybridize, and return one-half of the product to your Society for subsequent distribution. I think it would be proper to obtain a written obligation from each of the parties thus receiving the seeds."

"This new plant seems to be destined to take an important position among our economical products. Its seeds were sent some six years ago from the North of China, by M. de Montigny to the Geographical Society of Paris. From a cursory examination of a small field of it, growing at Verrieres in France in the Autumn of 1859, Mr. D. S. Browne, now on a mission from the office for collecting agricultural information and products, was led to infer that, from the peculiarity of the climate in which it was growing and its resemblance to Indian corn, it would flourish in any region wherever that plant would thrive. From this source he obtained some 200 pounds of the seed which was distributed in small packages by this office among Members of Congress, with the view of experimenting with it in all parts of the Union, and thereby ascertaining its adaptation to the soil and climate, and its economical value in the United States. In numerous instances the results proved satisfactory as it attained the height of twelve or fifteen feet as far north as St. Paul, Minnesota, and Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Illinois. The following year, while in France, on a similar mission as above, Mr. Browne obtained several bushels of the Chinese sugarcane, grown from that reported to have been brought from South Africa by Mr. Leonard Wray, of London, and which has since proved to be identical with that obtained in 1864.

"There appears to be a doubt among many in Europe, as well as in this country, as to the true botanical name of this plant. M. Louis Vilmoren, a scientific cultivator of Paris, provisionally gave it the name of *Holcus saccharatus*, which had previously been applied to the common broom-corn, if not to other species, or most varieties, of some allied plant. He also conjectured that it might be the *Sorghum vulgare* (Ardopogon sorghum or others) and thought that it might comprehend a variety as well as *Andropogon caryocylus*, etc., of Kunth. Mr. Wray, who has devoted much of his time and attention to the cultivation of this plant, with the view of extending its culture, states that, at Cape Natal and other places in the south-east part of Caffraria, there are at least fifteen varieties of it, some of them growing to a height of twelve and fifteen feet, with stems as thick as those of the sorghum *Saccharum officinale*. M. Vilmoren also says that in a collection of seeds sent to the Museum of Natural History at Paris in 1840, by M. de Abadie, there were thirty kinds of sorghum named, the growth of which he recognized several of the plants as of the opinion that the common broom-corn (*Holcus saccharatus*) and the Chinese sugarcane (*Sorghum vulgare*) and all of which contain more or less saccharine matter, belong to the same species but are variations caused by differences of soil and climate, or by a dissection to sport after the manner of Indian corn, and other plants under cultivation. The Chinese sugarcane differs from the others, in containing a far larger proportion of juice, and consequently is more valuable for fodder and other economical uses."

"In 1766 a plant analogous to the one in question was experimented upon at Florence, in Italy, by Pietro Arduino, for the extraction of sugar, yet it is not known to be of a different variety, as he describes its seeds as of a slender, tapering shape, with those of the Chinese sugarcane are of a shining jet-black, and in appearance identical with those of the *Sorghum vulgare* or the old collections.

"The Chinese sugarcane, when cultivated on ordinary land in the United States, somewhat after the manner of broom-corn, grows to a height of from eight to sixteen feet, while in Europe it does not attain more than half this altitude. Its stems are straight and smooth, having a white bloom or down, covering the leaves somewhat flexuous, falling over and greatly resembling the appearance of those of Indian corn, but more elegant in its form. When cultivated in hills, containing eight or ten stalks, each stalk forms a top, a central panicle of dense flowers, green at first, but changing into dark purple, or, in some cases, into a shining jet-black, and in appearance identical with those of the *Sorghum vulgare* or the old collections.

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It is found to remain in the field after the harvest season much longer than the long, narrow, slender will shoot out at the topmost joint one or more to each stalk, and mature a second crop of seed. The average yield of seed to each panicle is at least a gill.

**Miscellaneous.**

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